THE NEW SUNDAY EXPRESS

BENGALURU • SUNDAY • OCTOBER 20, 2024 • ₹12.00 • PAGES 28 • LATE CITY EDITION

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HEZBOLLAH DRONE EXPLODES NEAR NETANYAHU'S HOUSE IN CAESAREA

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the drone targeted the PM's private residence; Netanyahu was not home at that time

1 DEAD, 4 HURT AS 180 ROCKETS FIRED AT ISRAEL

In addition to the drone launched at Netanyahu's private residence in the coastal town, Israel's military said around 180 projectiles were fired in two separate barrages at northern Israel from Lebanon on Saturday. A 50-year-old man was killed after being hit by shrapnel while sitting in his car in northern Israel and four others were injured, Israel's medical services said

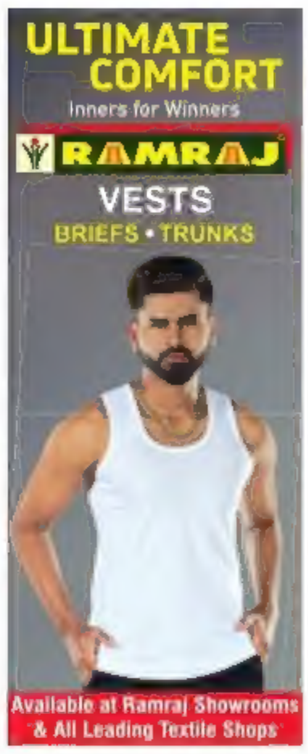
IDF POUNDS GAZA, AT LEAST 50 PEOPLE KILLED

- Hezbollah has not claimed responsibility for the drone attack but said it has launched several rockets at northern and central Israel | P12
- Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Saturday continued to press ahead with its armed offensive against Hamas militants still operating from Gaza
- 50 people, including kids, were reportedly killed in Gaza in past 24 hours

1,418

NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED IN LEBANON SINCE LATE SEPTEMBER, ACCORDING TO AFP

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI



ADDING TEETH TO LAW
1 Centre considers framing a punitive law to deal with hoax bomb callers so as to act as a deterrent
2 Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) suggests five-year imprisonment for the culprits
3 Home ministry consults the law and civil aviation ministries to suitably amend the Aircraft Act

Bomb threats to 30 more flights, regulator shifted

DGCA appointed coal secy in fresh shuffle

YESHI SELI & SHEKHAR SINGH @New Delhi

AMID waves after waves of hoax bomb threats shaking up the aviation industry, the government on Saturday shifted the regulator out of the civil aviation ministry.

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) chief Vikram Dev Dutt was appointed coal secretary as part of a top-level bureaucratic reshuffle. A joint secretary-level official is likely to take his place at the earliest, according to sources.

The transfers happened on a day when fresh bomb threats forced over 30 flights, including those on international routes, to make emergency landings. The affected carriers included Air India, Vistara, IndiGo, SpiceJet, Alliance Air, and Akasa Air.

"The Internet Protocol (IP) addresses from the threats today and the ones earlier this week have been traced to London, Germany, Canada and the US. However, it is possible the Virtual Private Networks (VPN) were used by some to hide their real locations," a source said.

In less than a week, hoax bomb threats have impacted close to 70 flights. On Saturday, officials from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) had a meeting with the CEOs of different airline operators in the civil aviation ministry.

They were briefed about the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for tackling threats, which cause fear and inconvenience to passengers and losses for the airlines.

The DGCA and the BCAS are expected to issue fresh guidelines to manage the situation.

Sources said a note was found in the rest room of one of the airlines warning of a bomb in a flight. However, all the threats were fake. Sources said IndiGo, Akasa, Vistara, Air India, SpiceJet and Alliance Air received five threats each.

The civil aviation ministry is reviewing regulations to introduce harsher penalties. The authorities are contemplating a five-year prison sentence and placing offenders on a no-fly list. At present, hoax bomb threats are dealt with under existing criminal laws. The government is exploring legal options to introduce a deterrent.

Joshi's brother, nephew arrested in cheating case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

UNION MINISTER Pralhad Joshi's brother Gopal Joshi and nephew Ajay Joshi were reportedly arrested on Saturday in Maharashtra by Basaveshwaranagar police in the Rs 2 crore cheating case. A complaint in this regard was filed by Sunitha Chavan, 48, wife of former Nagthan JDS MLA Devanand Fulsingh Chavan, on Thursday.

In the complaint, Sunitha stated that the accused had cheated her of Rs 2 crore by promising her family a BJP ticket to contest the recent Lok Sabha elections.

Gopal Joshi was arrested from a lodge in Kolhapur, while his son Ajay from Pune and brought to Hubballi.

On Friday, Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara told reporters that three people were arrested and a search was on for Gopal.

Somashekar Nayak, a close acquaintance of the complainant and suspected to be the key conspirator along with Vijaya Kumari, who posed as Pralhad Joshi's sister by calling herself as Vijayalakshmi, were arrested earlier in connection with the case.

In a statement on Friday, Pralhad Joshi said that he does not have any sister and mentioning Vijayalakshmi as his sister in the FIR is highly nonfactual. He severed his relationship with Gopal 32 years ago. CONTINUED ON P4

'Joshi not involved'

Sunitha Chavan, wife of former JDS MLA Devanand Fulsingh Chavan, has denied the role of Union Minister Pralhad Joshi in the case. "He has a spotless character. He is a person of integrity," she said

WITH THIS ISSUE

HEALTH SCARE

SM Krishna admitted to hospital, stable

MOHAMMED YACOOB @Bengaluru

FORMER chief minister and senior BJP leader **SM Krishna** was admitted to a private hospital in the city on Thursday after he suffered a stroke, according to sources.

The 92-year-old politician has been put on High Flow Nasal Cannula (HFNC) for oxygen support. However, the hospital denied these developments and maintained that Krishna came for a health check-up. He is stable and will be discharged by Monday.

The sources said Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar visited the hospital on Saturday and inquired about Krishna's health.

The former CM is reportedly unconscious and is under the observation of a team of doctors. "Krishna is likely to be shifted to a ward soon," said a source.

The former chief minister was recently discharged from the hospital after a few weeks of treatment.

CJI

'PRESERVED FOR FUTURE'

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said the role of the Supreme Court as a people's court must be preserved for the future, but it does not mean that it has to fulfil the role of an Oppn in Parliament| P9

J&K statehood step closer with L-G nod

FAYAZ WANI @Srinagar

PAVING the way for the restoration of statehood for Jammu & Kashmir, the Union Territory's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has cleared the resolution passed by the Omar Abdullah-led Cabinet in this regard. "The restoration of statehood will be the beginning of a healing process, reclaiming the constitutional rights and protecting the identity of people of Jammu and Kashmir," a statement issued on Saturday read. It noted that the J&K Cabinet has passed a resolution urging the Union Government to restore the statehood.

The Cabinet, which met under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in Srinagar on Thursday, had passed a unanimous resolution for restoration of statehood in its original form.

The Centre had on August 5, 2019, scrapped J&K's special status and bifurcated the erstwhile state into two Union territories — Jammu and Kashmir (with legislature) and Ladakh (without legislature).

"The Cabinet has authorised the chief minister to take up the matter with the prime minister and Government of India for restoration of statehood," an official spokesman said.

He said protection of Jammu and Kashmir's unique identity and the constitutional rights of people remains the cornerstone of the newly elected government's policy.

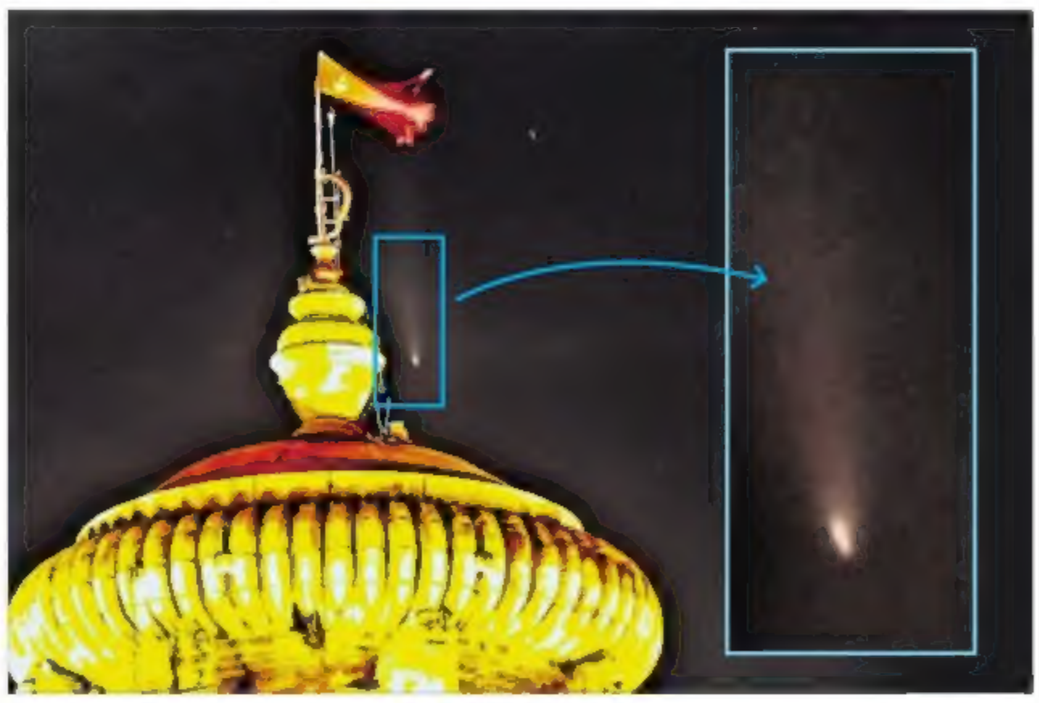
According to the spokesperson, the CM would be proceeding to New Delhi in the coming days to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Union ministers in this regard.

Before assuming power, Omar had suggested that the first cabinet meeting should pass a resolution on restoration of statehood and hand over the draft of the resolution to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and other ministers.

Omar's National Conference had contested the Assembly polls on the plank of restoration of Article 370 and statehood.

RESOLUTION SILENT ON RESTORATION OF A370

The Omar Abdullah-led Cabinet's resolution only mentions full statehood for J&K and does not talk about restoring Article 370, triggering protests from other J&K parties, which accused the NC of reneging on its poll promise



STAR TAIL

Comet C/2023 A3 Tsuchinshan-Atlas captured near Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar on Friday night. It's considered the brightest in over a decade | BIKASH KUMAR SUNI

MURDER-FOR-HIRE

U.S. CHARGES BOGUS, CLAIMS VIKASH YADAV'S COUNSEL

UJWAL JALALI @New Delhi

THE counsel of former Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) officer Vikash Yadav on Saturday termed the charges brought against his client by the US law enforcement agencies as bogus and part of an international ploy to defame India. "He (Vikash Yadav) is being deliberately framed. It appears that all this is an international plot to defame India and the country's top intelligence agencies," advocate RK Handoo told this newspaper.

Yadav, a former government officer, was indicted by the US authorities for his alleged role in a foiled murder-for-hire plot against Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on US soil.

In a completely unrelated case of extortion, Yadav was arrested by the Delhi Police in December last year and lodged in Tihar Jail for four months till he got regular bail. The extortion-cum-kidnapping case was registered by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police on the complaint of a businessman in Delhi's Rohini.

The FIR said Yadav demanded money in the name of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, forced the victim to sign a blank cheque, took ₹50,000 from his cafe and deleted all CCTV recordings there.

As for the US indictment, advocate Handoo denied all allegations and said that if anyone reads the charges from a proper perspective, they would understand that all of them are fallacious. "As I understand being his lawyer, Vikash is a decent, well-read, and well-cultured man. I cannot fathom that he can be involved in any such activity," Handoo said.

CLEAN RECORD

The interim bail order by a Delhi court referred to Yadav as "an ex-government employee having clean antecedents"

Health insurance premium: GoM moots GST relief

DIPAK MONDAL @New Delhi

THE Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted by the GST Council to look into the demand for lower rates on health and life insurance premium recommended a complete GST waiver on health insurance premium for senior citizens. Sources said the GoM, headed by the Bihar DyCM Samrat Choudhary, also recommended that no GST be levied on health insurance premium where the sum insured is up to ₹5 lakh. For all other health insurance policies, the GoM has proposed 18% GST.

As far as life insurance policies are concerned, most panel members favoured complete waiver of GST on term insurance premium. Term insurance policies offer a sum assured only at the death of the policyholder.

The GoM on GST rate rationalisation, too, met and recommended a three-slab structure instead of the existing four-tier tax structure—5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%. Sources said the slabs will be based on pricing with high-value items attracting GST at higher rates. The panel also decided to lower tax rates on 20-litre packaged drinking water bottles, bicycles, and exercise notebooks to 5% from 18%. The proposals include cutting GST on bicycles costing under ₹10,000 to 5% from 12%.

The panel has also suggested higher GST for some luxury items. According to one of the members, this would help the government mop up ₹22,000 crore more, thus making up for the revenue losses due to reduction in GST rates on health and life insurance premiums.

KSMSCL officials diverting med supplies elsewhere?

EXPRESS EXCLUSIVE

KARTHIK KK @Mysuru

OFFICIALS of Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation Ltd (KSMSCL) here have been allegedly hoarding huge quantities of essential medical supplies, particularly gloves, while misleading government hospitals into believing that they are in short supply.

According to sources, officials, including a senior pharmacist of KSMSCL, withhold critical medical supplies and stock them in the warehouse, but make new indents for purchase. They allegedly dispose of the withheld stocks through their agents and pocket huge sums of money.

A highly placed source told *The New Sunday Express* that these officials show 'no stock' or 'less stock' of gloves in the 'drug-wise stock on hand' list. But in reality, these stocks are kept in the warehouse even as government hospitals grapple with shortage of supplies.

"Government hospitals are misled into believing that gloves are in short supply, directly affecting frontline healthcare workers who have been tirelessly serving the public. The drug stock lists are manipulated to cover up this unethical practice and divert the supplies," said a source.

Gloves allegedly hoarded in the warehouse | EXPRESS

Access to Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation Ltd records revealed 19 boxes of surgical gloves (NA 6.5) for May and June in the stock list for delivery, while more than 90 such boxes of gloves were hidden in the warehouse.

When *The New Sunday Express* tried to contact the official in-charge of the warehouse and other senior officials at the office of KSMSCL in Jayalakshmipuram here, they were 'not reachable'. P7

EXPRESS READ

BJP picks Bommai's son Bharat for Shiggaon

Bengaluru: BJP on Saturday announced former CM and MP Basavaraj Bommai's son Bharat Bommai as its candidate for Shiggaon bypoll and party's ST Morcha president Bangara Hanumanta from Sandur Assembly segment | P4

MoS Bandi Sanjay detained in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Hundreds of Group-I aspirants marched towards the Telangana Secretariat on Saturday, seeking rescheduling of exams. The day saw police detaining several persons, including BJP leader and MoS Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay |P7